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L'Association internationale de Sémiotique
Asociación internacional de semiótica
Internationale Vereinigung für Semiotik



NEW
BULGARIAN
UNIVERSITY



Southeast European Center
for Semiotic Studies

NEW SEMIOTICS

Between Tradition and Innovation



12th WORLD CONGRESS OF SEMIOTICS

Sofia 2014 New Bulgarian University

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DEED, OTHERNESS AND LOVE IN BAKHTIN AND PEIRCE

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Abstract

This paper evidences the philosophical orientation subtending Bakhtin's research on the interpretation of the literary text. If we separate this philosophical basis from his writings, it is easy to interpret him wrongly as a literary critic, as in fact has been the case. This implies not understanding the *sense* of his dedication to literary discourse. Publication of his early works, in some cases in recent times (between the second half of the 1970s and the second half of the 1980s) has greatly contributed to grasping this "sense". In the first place it is a question of understanding Bakhtin's "philosophy of the act, or deed" passing through a study of the relation between author and hero and therefore to his monograph on Dostoevsky (1st ed. 1929, 2nd ed. 1963) and ultimately to the study of the carnivalesque and the grotesque body through the works of Rabelais (as from the 1940s, even though Bakhtin's *Rabelais* was only published in 1965). Once the philosophical framework of Bakhtin's discourse and of his dialogism is made to emerge (the topic of the first part of this text), it is possible to relate Bakhtin's conception to Peirce's (the topic of the second part). This relation not only concerns their conception of the sign as they have proposed it. It also concerns the fact that traceable in both is a strong attention for the problem of otherness, listening and for the relation with the other in terms of "love". Both in the cosmic vision delineated in Peirce and in what Bakhtin calls the "great experience" – juxtaposing it to

the small and short-sighted experience of the individual subject assumed to be autonomous and separate from others – love becomes the essential relation not only for the human world, not only for life, but for the universe in its entirety (Peircean agapasm).

**In his conversation with Saint Bernard in Paradise, Dante
suggests that our body will be resurrected not for its own sake,
but for the sake of those who love us – those who knew and
loved our one-and-only countenance.**

(Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in
Bakhtin 1990, pp. 57)

1. Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical vision

In his 1973 conversation with Viktor Duvakin, Mikhail M. Bakhtin says: "Marija Veniaminovna Judina was an absolutely unofficial person. Anything official was a burden for her. For that matter, the same as me. Neither can I suffer the official" (Eng. trans. from the Italian in Bakhtin 2008: 347).

Bakhtin, an unofficial person: with respect to official, public circles, he came from another circle, one tending towards unofficialness even before his arrest and conviction; and thanks precisely to such an attitude, he was able to proceed in his voyage of reflection and writing, during the many long years of total exclusion from the culture of his time (Ponzio 1992; Petrilli 2012).

In his text of the early 1920s, "K filosofii postupka", where he introduces the notion of exotopy (*vnenakodimost'*), Bakhtin also introduces the notion of "architectonics" according to which all values, meanings and spatial-temporal relationships are characterized in terms of otherness: "I-for-myself, the other-for-me, and I-for-the-other": "All the values of actual life and culture are arranged around the basic architectonic points of the actual world of the performed act or deed: *scientific values, aesthetic values, political values* (including both ethical and social values), and, finally, *religious values*" (Bakhtin 1993: 54)

Postupok, the word used by Bakhtin and consequently by Bocharov in the title of the text in question, means a lived act. The world of *postupok* is, according to Bakhtin, the *world of responsive praxis by the singular individual*. In this world, that which is endowed with abstract meaning and mechanical unity in the world of science, art, in academies, politics, technology, in the world of impersonal roles, jobs, tasks, duties, all this in the world of responsive praxis recovers sense and is integrated into the unity of responsible acts.

Postupok, *act*, or *deed*, contains "stup", which means "step" in the sense of "decision", "an important step", "a big step", "to take a step", "bring himself to take a certain step": initiative, stance, to pass from the level of the theoretic, normative, planning, to the level of personal answerable praxis. Bakhtin also uses the verb *postupať*, to act, to perform an answerable act, or deed.

In its connection with "to take a step", "*postupok*" recalls the expression "transgredient", connected in Bakhtin with "outsideness", "exotopy", "*vnenakodimost'*": "transgredient", from Latin *transgredo*; English, *step across*, *step over*. In "K filosofii postupka" Bakhtin characterizes the contemporary crisis as the crisis of the contemporary act, which has become technical, formal, mechanical action. He identifies this crisis in the separation of the act, with its concrete participative, responsible motivation, from its cultural product which is reified and as a consequence loses sense. This interpretation is similar to that offered by Edmund Husserl and his phenomenology, especially as developed in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* (published

posthumously in 1954). But in Bakhtin, unlike Husserl where a certain theoreticism persists, sense is not conferred by the intentional consciousness, by the transcendental subject, but by responsible / answerable praxis without alibis as performed by the single unique individual (cf. Ponzio 2008a, 2008b).

In a passage from *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin reflects on forms of proxy, in particular political proxy through which one's responsibility/answerability is delegated to another. Bakhtin refers to political representation where in the attempt at shirking political responsibility/answerability, the sense of uniqueness, of one's personal participation without alibis is often lost. As a consequence responsibility/answerability becomes void, specialized and formal with all the risks that this loss of sense involves (cf. *Ibid.*: 52).

As Bakhtin says:

In attempting to understand our whole life as secret representation and every act we perform as a ritual act, we turn into impostors or pretenders.

Being a representative does not abolish, but merely specializes my personal answerability. [...] The loss of once-occurrent participation in the course of specialization is especially frequent in the case of political answerability. The same loss of the once-occurrent unity takes place as a result of the attempt to see in every other, in every object of a given act or deed, not a singular individual which is concretely participative, but a representative of a certain large whole.

What is answerable does not dissolve in what is specialized (politics), otherwise what we have is not an answerable deed, but a technical or instrumental action (*Ibid.*: 52–53; Eng. trans. reviewed in light of It. trans. from Russian in Bachtin e il suo Circolo 2014: 125–126).

According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's "philosophy" must not be identified in the specific conceptions and standpoints of the heroes in his novels or in specific contents. He calls this mistaken interpretation "Dostoevskyvism". Instead, Bakhtin finds traces of the architectonics he theorizes in the overall structure of Dostoevsky's works which he describes as organized according to the principle of dialogism. This is what Bakhtin alludes to when he says, "affirmation of someone else's 'I' not as an object but as another subject" (Bakhtin 1963, Eng. trans.: 11), this is the principle governing Dostoevsky's worldview. Dostoevsky's "polyphonic novel" describes the character no longer as an "I", as an object, but as a centre that is "other," forming the perspective according to which his world is organized:

Dostoevsky carried out, as it were, a small-scale Copernican revolution when he took what had been a firm and finalizing authorial definition and turned it into an aspect of the hero's self-definition. [...] Not without reason does Dostoevsky force Makar Devushkin to read Gogol's "Overcoat" and to take it as a story about himself [...]

Devushin had glimpsed himself in the image of the hero of "The Overcoat," which is to say, as something totally quantified, measured, and defined to the last detail: all of you is here, there is nothing more in you, and nothing more to be said about you. He felt himself to be hopelessly predetermined and finished off, as if he were already quite dead, yet at the same time he sensed the falseness of such an approach. [...]

The serious and deeper meaning of this revolt might be expressed this way: a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive

process. *In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.* [...]

The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself. (Bakhtin 1963, Eng. trans.: 49–59)

This is the itinerary followed by Bakhtin from his early works. Furthermore, thanks to his early interest in the philosophy of the responsible/answerable act, this itinerary coherently develops into an interest in the philosophy of literature, where *of literature* is a subject genitive: not a philosophical vision to which literature must be subjected, but a philosophical vision which literature, verbal art, make possible.

If we now examine the last paper published by Bakhtin during his lifetime, “Toward a methodology of the human sciences” (in Bakhtin 1979), written in 1974, we soon discover a surprising insistence on the same issue proposed at the beginning of his research itineraries. The material forming this paper was mainly written toward the end of the 1930s or beginning of the 1940s. It returns to the problem of the impossibility of applying categories proper to the subject-object relationship to the human world. When dealing with human expression, the criterion for evaluating knowledge is neither “exactness”, nor philosophical “rigour” in the Husserlian sense, but the “profoundness of answering comprehension”.

The centre of value in the world of aesthetic vision is not man in general, abstract man related to abstract values like good and evil, but a concrete human being, a concrete individual, a mortal human being. All spatial and temporal moments as well as all values such as good and evil, beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, become concrete moments only when they are correlated with concrete values in the architectonics of the concrete individual as a mortal human being. In the aesthetic chronotope all spatial and temporal relations are correlated with man and only in this relation do they acquire valuational meaning: “high”, “far”, “above”, “below”, “abyss”, “infinity”, boundlessness”. All these expressions reflect life and the tenseness of a mortal human individual: in the horizon and in the environment of mortal man space gains body, time possesses depth and weight (cf. Bakhtin 1993: 64–65).

Moreover, according to Bakhtin, the centre of value in the architectonics of the aesthetic vision is not man considered as self-identical, but “as a lovingly affirmed concrete actuality” (*Ibid.*: 63). All constitutive aspects of the architectonics of the aesthetic vision are encompassed by an all-accepting loving assertion of the human being. In this sense, the relation of the author, and consequently of the reader, to his hero is “an un-self-interested interest”, an un-self-interested participation. Says Bakhtin:

In this sense one could speak of objective aesthetic love as constituting the principle of aesthetic seeing (except that “love” should not be understood in a passive psychological sense). [...] The variety of human values can present itself only to a loving contemplation. [...] Only un-self-interested love on the principle of “I love him not because he is good, but he is good because I love him”, only lovingly interested attention, is capable of generating a sufficiently intent power to encompass and retain the concrete manifoldness of existing, without impoverishing and schematizing it. (*Ibid.*: 64; Eng. trans. reviewed in light of It. trans. from Russian in Bachtin e il suo Circolo 2014: 146–147)

On the contrary, an indifferent loveless, or hostile reaction is always a reaction that impoverishes, breaks, ignores, neglects. The biological function itself of indifference consists in diverting the attention from what is inessential for one's own needs: a kind of economy or preservation. And this too is the function of oblivion. In conclusion, as Bakhtin says: "Only love is capable of being aesthetically productive; only in correlation with the loved is fullness of the manifold possible" (Ibid.).

Therefore, what does responsive understanding consist of in life, in the architectonics of life, in its chronotope, that is, responsive understanding with respect to what we have experienced and understood in art, in its architectonics, in its chronotope, so that everything we have experienced and understood does not remain ineffectual in life? Bakhtin's answer throughout all his work is: responsive understanding consists in recognizing, in appreciating un-self-interestedly the value of the other, in listening to the other, to the other's distinctive, peculiar word, in everyday life, in all kinds of daily praxis.

2. Peirce's semiotics and agapastic forces in the universe

By reading together Charles S. Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin, it is possible to construct a semiotic model that explains signs and semiosis in all their complexity. This sign model is distant from oversimplifying approaches that put the *signifiant* at the service of a *signifié*, already given outside the interpretation/communication process. Peirce places the sign in the complex context of semiosis and in the relation with the interpretant. Bakhtin evidences the fact that the sign can only flourish in the context of dialogism. The implication is that the logic of otherness is structural to the sign, that otherness is at the very heart of identity. The sign is not possible without an interpretant which means that the interpretant is not secondary, an accessory. Quite on the contrary, the interpretant is constitutive of the sign. This means to say that meaning is not in the sign, but in the relation among signs (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005, 2008). Bakhtin thematizes the dialogic nature of the word, including the word of interior discourse. Therefore, both Bakhtin and Peirce evidence the dialogical nature of the sign. In fact, to be this sign here the sign must be at once identical to itself and different. Indeed, the original modality of subsisting as a sign is otherness and dialogue. By contrast with univocality, reiteration, identity which characterize signals, dialogue and otherness are the original, constitutive modality of that which emerges as a sign properly understood.

The sign subsists as a sign insofar as it is a response. A sign is a sign in relation to that which is other from itself. In fact, the sign is differentiated both from the object acting as a referent and from another sign acting as interpretant, without which it could not be a sign. Peirce's definition of semiosis is based on the notion of interpretant which mediates between *solicitation* (*interpretandum*) and *response*. Mediation distinguishes semiosis from mere dynamical action. The latter alludes to "action of brute force" which characterizes the relation between the terms forming a pair. Instead, semiosis involves a triadic relation, it "is an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant". Like Bakhtin, for Peirce too the relation connecting sign (interpreted) and interpretant is a dialogic relation. Both evidence the *dialogic* nature of sign and semiosis. In such a framework the role of otherness is no less than pivotal; as stated above, the original modality of the sign is otherness and dialogism. This aspect of Peirce's conception of the sign is central to my own interpretation of his philosophical perspective and its cosmic reverberations.

In the architectonics of Charles Peirce's philosophical system what he denominates as "chance", "love" and "necessity" indicate three modes of development regulating evolution in the cosmos. As he says in his essay of 1893, "Evolutionary Love":

Three modes of evolution have thus been brought before us: evolution by fortuitous variation, evolution by mechanical necessity, and evolution by creative love. We may term them tychastic evolution, or tychasm, anancastic evolution, or anancasm, and agapastic evolution, or agapasm. The doctrines which represent these as severally of principal importance we may term tychasticism, anancasticism, and agapasticism. On the other hand the mere propositions that absolute chance, mechanical necessity, and the law of love are severally operative in the cosmos may receive the names of tychism, anancism, and agapism. (CP 6.302)

Connections can be evidenced between Peirce's evolutionary cosmology, his semiotics and logic. The concept of *agapasm* and the connection with abductive inference is particularly interesting. Peirce made an important contribution to this area of research with a series of five articles published in the journal *The Monist*, beginning from 1891. In these articles he develops his evolutionary cosmology, introducing the doctrines of tychasticism (from Greek τύχη, *tyche*), anancasticism (from Greek ἀνάγκη, *ananche*), agapasticism (from Greek αγαπ, or ηγαπ, *agape*), and synechism (from Greek συνεχής, *synechēs*).¹

Two later writings (1905) on "pragmatism", or the substitute term "pragmaticism",² unite the developments of Peirce's cosmology to his theory of semiotics: "What Pragmatism is?" (1905, CP 5.411–437) and "Issues of Pragmaticism" (1905, CP 5.438–463). In fact, we have seen that the interpretant plays a central role in Peirce's semiotics, which, in turn, is inseparable from his pragmatism as much as from his cosmology.

Peirce had already elaborated his doctrine of categories – firstness, secondness, and thirdness which are always co-present, interdependent and irreducible to each other –, in "On a New List of Categories" (1867, CP 1.545–559)³. His doctrine of categories constitutes the foundation of his ontology and cosmology. Therefore, Peirce's doctrine of categories is connected to his ontological-cosmological trichotomy (agapasm, anancasm, tychasm), to his triadic typology of inferential logic (abduction, induction, and deduction), and to his sign triads (in particular the tripartition between icon, index, and symbol) (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005).

As Peirce states in the citation above, three strictly interrelated modes of evolutionary development operate in the cosmos: *tychastic evolution* or *tychasm*, development regulated by the action of chance – "evolution by fortuitous variation"; *anancastic evolution* or *anancasm* which is dominated by the effect of necessity – "evolution by mechanical necessity"; and *agapastic evolution* or *agapasm*, oriented by the law of love – "evolution by creative love". The names of

¹ "The Architecture of Theories" (1891, CP 6.7–34), "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined" (1892, CP 6.35–65), "The Law of Mind" (1892, CP 6.102–163), "Man's Glassy Essence" (1892, CP 6.238–268), "Evolutionary Love" (1893, CP 6.287–317), and "Reply to the Necessitarians. Rejoinder to Dr. Carus" (1893, CP 6.588–6.615).

² Charles S. Peirce introduced the term "pragmatism" in the 1870's to nominate his principle of inquiry and his account of meaning according to which any statement must have practical bearings to be meaningful. The pragmatic account of meaning provided a method for clearing up metaphysical ambiguities and assisting scientific inquiry. However, Peirce was unhappy with both his own early formulations and the developments made by his fellow pragmatists William James and John Dewey in the U.S.A, and Ferdinand C.S. Schiller in Great Britain. Consequently, he was led to reformulate his own original account of pragmatism which he renamed "pragmaticism" in order to distinguish it from subsequent and more "nominalistic" versions. For further considerations on the terms "pragmatism" and "pragmaticism", see Petrilli 2010a: 50, n. 2; see also each of my entries on Morris, Peirce and pragmatism in Cobley 2001 and 2010a.

³ "On a New List of Categories" is usually referred to as an 1867 paper, which is the year it was delivered as an oral presentation (14 May) to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. It was subsequently published the year after, in 1868, in the relative Proceedings (n. 7, pp. 287–98).

the doctrines that elect these three evolutionary modes as their object of analysis are, respectively, *tychasticism*, *anancasticism*, and *agapasticism*. Whereas the terms tychism, anancism and agapism name “the mere propositions that absolute chance, mechanical necessity, and the law of love are severally operative in the cosmos...” (CP 6.302).

Each of these three main evolutionary modes contains traces of the other two; therefore they are not pure, but rather contaminate each other reciprocally. In other words, they act together in different combinations and to varying degrees, reaching different states of equilibrium in evolutionary processes that are dominated now by chance, now by necessity, now by love. Consequently, far from excluding each other, tychasm, anancasm, and agapasm share in the same general elements which, however, emerge most clearly in agapastic evolution. Evoking the language of mathematics, Peirce describes tychasm and anancasm as “degenerate forms of agapasm”; in other words, agapasm englobes the former as its degenerate cases (CP 6.303).

Tychasm shares a disposition for reproductive creation with agapasm, “the forms preserved being those that use the spontaneity conferred upon them in such wise as to be drawn into harmony with their original” (CP 6.304). This, as Peirce continues, “only shows that just as love cannot have a contrary, but must embrace what is most opposed to it, as a degenerate case of it, so tychasm is a kind of agapasm” (CP 6.304). However, unlike tychastic evolution which proceeds by exclusion, in genuine agapasm, advance takes place by virtue of a “positive sympathy”; in other words, by virtue of attraction or affinity among the “created” – read “interpretants” – “springing from continuity of mind” (or synechism) (CP 6.304).

The overall orientation of anancasm is regulated by “an intrinsic affinity for the good”. From this perspective, it too is similar to the agapastic type of advance. However, as close to agapasm as it may be, anancasm lacks in a determinant for evolution; the factor of “freedom”, which instead characterizes creative love and subtends tychism (CP 6.305).

Agapasm, understood as a force of development through affinity and sympathy, is strongly iconic (correlate terms being notoriously the index and symbol). It is tantamount to the force of attraction, that is, to the relation of similarity or affinity among interpretants. Though the action of chance and necessity are foreseen in agapastic evolution, the forces of attraction, affinity, freedom, and fortuitousness dominate. This means to say that when agapastic forces prevail in the continuous (synechetic) flow of infinite semiosis, iconicity dominates over indexicality and symbolicity in the relation among interpretants.

The concept of continuity or synechism involves that of regularity. As emerges from her own philosophy of signifying and interpretive processes, Victoria Welby too believes that development is articulated in an open structure, therefore that continuity presupposes relational logic grounded in otherness (Welby 1983). The logic of otherness may be considered as a sort of dialogic – a logic that recovers the dimension of *dialogism* in Mikhail Bakhtin’s sense (see Petrilli 2012, 2013). In other words, following both Peirce and Bakhtin, dialogism is understood as a modality of semiosis, which may or may not involve verbal signs and may or may not take the form of dialogue (Bakhtin 1981; Ponzio 2006a). Thus described, dialogism is determined by *the degree of opening towards otherness*. Agapastic evolution is achieved through the law of love; creative and altruistic love, love founded on the logic of otherness, what we have described as *absolute otherness*.

With “pragmaticism”, Peirce coherently developed his cognitive semiotics in close relation to the study of human social behaviour and the totality of human interests, thereby evidencing the necessary implication of problems of knowledge with problems of the pragmatic and axiological orders. Beyond “reason”, Peirce theorizes “reasonableness” understood as open-ended dialectical-dialogic semiotic activity, unfinished and unfinalizable, unbiased by prejudice and regulated by the logic of love, otherness and continuity or “synechism”. He supercedes the limits of cog-

nitivism orienting his semiotic research in a pragmatic-ethic or evaluative-operative direction.

The dialogic conception of signs and the logic of otherness that orientates it are a necessary condition for Peirce's doctrine of continuity, or synechism: the doctrine that all that exists is continuous in the development of the universe and consequently of the human subject that inhabits it. Dialogism and otherness account for the logic of synechism, continuity, but also for the driving forces exerted in evolutionary processes by discontinuity, chaos, inexactitude, uncertainty, unascertainability and fallibilism (CP 1.172). And while the dialogic relation between self and other is described as a crucial condition for evolution in the creative process – both the other from self and the other of self, as Emmanuel Levinas (1961, 1972) so clearly explains –, another major and correlate force described as most firing creativity is love, that is, the force of agape.

The most advanced developments in reason and knowledge are achieved through the creative power of reasonableness, governed by the forces of agapasm. Reasonableness is endowed with the power of transforming the self's horror of the stranger, the alien, the self's fear of the other (understood as the fear one experiences of the other foreign to self) into attraction for the other, into listening and hospitality towards the other.

According to Peirce, love is directed to the concrete, and not to abstractions; towards one's neighbour, not necessarily in a spatial sense, locally, but in the sense of affinity, a person "we live near [...] in life and feeling". Love is a driving force in logical procedure characterized in terms of abduction, iconicity, and creativity. In accord with Peirce's interpretation of St. John, the development of mind occurs largely through the power of love. Agape understood as orientation towards the absolute other, even care for the other is capable of transforming the hateful into the loveable. The type of evolution foreseen by synechism, the principle of continuity, is evolution through the agency of love:

Everybody can see that the statement of St. John is the formula of an evolutionary philosophy, which teaches that growth comes only from love, from I will not say self-sacrifice, but from the ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse. [...] It is not dealing out cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending them as I would the flowers in my garden. The philosophy we draw from John's gospel is that this is the way mind develops; and as for the cosmos, only so far as it yet is mind, and so has life, is it capable of further evolution. Love, recognizing germs of loveliness in the hateful, gradually warms it into life, and makes it lovely. That is the sort of evolution which every careful student of my essay "The Law of Mind" must see that synechism calls for. (CP 6.289, 1893)

Peirce polemically contrasts the "Gospel of Christ", where progress is achieved through a relation of sympathy among neighbours, with the "Gospel of greed" which reflects the dominant ideology of his day and encourages the individual to assert its own rights and interests, its own individuality or egoistic identity over the other (CP 6.294). On Peirce's account, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), with its concepts of natural selection, survival of the fittest, struggle for existence, translates this conception of the individual from political economy to the life sciences, from economic development to the development of the living organism. Peirce himself chose the agapastic theory of evolution, and in fact considered his own strong attraction for this doctrine as possible proof of its validity (CP 6.295).

Recalling Henry James, Peirce distinguished between self-love, which is directed towards another insofar as that other is identical to self, and creative love, which is directed towards

what is completely different, even “hostile and negative” with respect to self, towards the other as “absolutely other”, as Levinas would say (cfr. Ponzio 2006b). We could propose a typology of love measured in terms of the logic of otherness, on a scale that moves from high degrees of identity to high degrees of alterity. But truly creative love, as both Welby and Peirce argue, is love regulated by the logic of otherness, love for the other, directed at the other insofar as that other is absolutely other, significant on its own account, *per sé*. The logic of otherness is agapastic logic. Peirce defines love as “the impulse projecting creations into independency and drawing them into harmony” (CP 6.288).

Developing Peirce’s discourse in the direction of Levinas’ philosophy of the self, love transforms fear of the other, in other words, fear provoked in self by the other, into fear for the other, for the other’s safety, to the point of becoming wholly responsible for the other, of taking the blame for all the wrongs that the other is subjected to. Love, reasonableness, and creativity are all grounded in the logic of otherness and dialogism and together move the evolutionary dynamics of semiosis. And given the unique, species-specific capacity as so-called “semiotic animals” (Deely, Petrilli, Ponzio), human beings are also invested with a major role in terms of responsibility towards semiosis generally, that is, towards life in all its forms over the entire planet.

From our own point of view, this approach is oriented “semioethically” to embrace questions traditionally pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, and ideology. *Semioethics* extends its gaze beyond the logico-cognitive boundaries of semiotics to focus on the relation of signs to values, therefore on the axiological dimension of sign activity, which includes the human disposition for evaluation, critique, creativity and responsibility (cf. Petrilli and Ponzio 2003, 2010). This orientation is somehow prefigured by *significs* – the term Victoria Welby chose for her approach to the theory of sign ad meaning and special focus on the problem of “significance”, therefore, on the relation of signs to values (see Petrilli 2009, 2015). The expression “semioethics” indicates the human disposition for evaluation, the value conferred upon something, the pertinence, signifying potential, and significance of human behaviour, participation in the life of signs not only on the cognitive and logical level, but also interconnectedly in corporeal, emotional, pragmatic and ethical terms.

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